

2443 R

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR	
REVIEWED BY <i>[Signature]</i>	DATE 3/2/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____	
TS AUTH. _____	REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐	
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☐	
RELEASE DATED ☐	
PA for FOI EXEMPTIONS _____	

March 27, 1979

Mr. Louis S. Gurvich
Suite 1102-300 Poydras
New Orleans. La 70130

Dear Louis:

I have given your last two letters a great deal of thought. I re-read your letter of February 20, several times to put your comments in context with my thoughts about the Peoples Temple tragedy.

I understand your bitterness and disappointment about the perceived failure of the Department to act after Mrs. Blakey defected, but unfortunately apart from the statements she made that could be construed as self-serving in view of her alleged intimate involvement in Peoples Temple financial transactions, there was no substantiating evidence developed. Certainly, Mrs. Blakey's defection added an additional element to the allegations that had been made. Her charges were discussed informally by me with Guyanese Police Officials but, absent any corroborating evidence the Guyanese were not prepared to conduct a formal investigation of conditions at Jonestown. However, there were Guyanese Police Officials who were very suspicious of Jones and who were monitoring Temple activities. Nevertheless, these Officials could never develop the information that was needed by them to justify a detailed investigation that may have substantiated the claims made by Mrs. Blakey and others. Another element that had to be considered was trying to determine whether a person has been intimidated, coerced or otherwise influenced against his/her will. This is very difficult to prove especially when I could not get anyone at the farm to admit that any of the charges were true. I believe Congressman Ryan was successful in his efforts because of the size of his party and the time he spent at the camp. I normally spent about 5 to 7 hours at the farm during each visit. On my last trip to Jonestown our Ambassador instituted a policy of sending two officers on visits to Jonestown in an attempt to have a more in-depth view of what was occurring at the townsite.

- 2 -

Essentially, as I go over the horrible massacre of November 18 and the events that led up to it, I am convinced that there was no way to prevent it. This is not a cop out, but given the probability that had the Guyanese stationed police at the farm, Temple members would probably have been able to disarm them and then proceed to carry out their plans.

I have also thought about your comments regarding the removal operation. Our sole concern was to remove the bodies before they became a health hazard. There was not sufficient time for the type of investigation that would have been needed to determine to what extent members voluntarily committed suicide or were murdered. This may come out in the FBI investigation although I doubt it. Timothy and Michael Carter may be able to shed some light on this, but probably will not for fear of implicating themselves. I think most of us here were shocked and numbed by the numbers that died and I'm sure the military on the scene just wanted to get the job over with. I believe the lack of survivors makes it difficult to really get to the bottom of this entire sorry episode.

For what it's worth, I predicted here that the local Guyanese would steal everything not nailed down. We did get a Consular Officer in there as quickly as possible to protect what was left but in the final analysis it is up to the Guyanese to safeguard the personal property of the members.

Finally, please let me know if you still have not received the death certificate for your daughter. If I can shed any further light on this subject, or if you have any further questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Richard A. McCoy
Office of Caribbean Affairs

57
February 20, 1979

Mr. Richard A. McCoy
Office of Caribbean Affairs
Department of State, ARA/CAR
Room 3244
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. McCoy:

I do appreciate hearing from you, but I must confess I am bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Consulate in Guyana, the Department of Guyana Affairs, and the State Department in not being alerted by the impetus given by the defection of Debbie Layton Blakey to those fears that I and others had relayed to the Consulate a year before. I agree that it was a duty that would have been above and beyond the norm, but D. L. Blakey's deposition and explanation of what was happening, certainly called for action exceeding normal Consulate functions.

I am one of eight to ten people (Americans) who got into Jonestown after the murders. I stated on Wednesday, November 23rd, that the majority of the victims were not voluntary suicides. I had then and still have excellent reasons for so saying and photographic evidence to back it up. I doubt seriously if anyone, including the soldiers who removed the bodies, looked at as many bodies as closely as I did. Cameramen used zoom lens and stayed up-wind nor do I blame them. The stench and the sight were a nightmare. What is unbearable is that there are so terribly many unanswered questions that I am staggered by the apathy of the American government's handling of the Jonestown disaster. I am aware of some of the difficulties and sympathize, but only to a mild extent, in that just a little extra effort might have gone a long way.

As regards the apathy,

1. For example, bodies removed from the Assembly Hall could have been marked with an "A".

The ones across the ditch could have been marked "B".

Those on the other side of the runway between the Community Building and the Assembly Hall could have been marked with a "C", etc. because WHERE THE BODIES WERE LOCATED HAD A GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH THE "VOLUNTARY" NATURE OF THEIR DEATHS. For example, using my form with the "A's" and the "C's"; they appeared to have accepted their fate and were quite orderly. On the other hand, Section "B" across the ditch, Section "D" at the other end of the Assembly Hall from Jones and the open area between the ditch and the crops, were pandemonium. One simple letter, added to the numbers on the body bags, would have told many of us the nature of our loved one's death. This may seem irrelevant to the State Department, but it certainly isn't to a parent or any God-fearing person.

2. Who tagged the ankles of the bodies near the main Assembly area and those immediately adjacent to it? No one knew the names in Kaituma, yet I learned of my daughter's death in Kaituma from a partial casualty list which had been made up Sunday and Monday--by whom? Was it the Carter brothers? Prokes? or Clayton and Rhodes? The first three, hard core fanatics, would be the ones who "policed" the area. I do not believe Clayton or Rhodes did the identifying, though I could be mistaken. Might it have been others? (Roberts knows.) There were only 187 names on the partial casualty list. I cannot say whether or not a commensurate number were tagged, but I believe so. Personal identification was not my motivation except in the case of my daughter, but I do remember Pauline Groot, and Sara and Richard Troops, and some few others, (Chaikin and Touchette). Johnny Cobbs and Tim Jones probably are better aware than I of the location of many of the bodies.
3. Little if any notice has been paid to the plundering of Jonestown. Every building that I entered was in complete disarray (primarily housing areas). Nothing of value was left in the Pittman or Tubman house or in Cottages 31 through 54.
4. I still have not received the Death Certificate for my daughter.
5. Why weren't the odor removal chrystals used at the Dover Mortuary? When I met my daughter's body at the Airport, the stench was as bad as Jonestown itself.
6. I am aware that over half of the bodies are as yet unclaimed. That does not mean everyone in Jonestown was defective or unwanted or unloved or in any way different from a good portion of the youth of America today.

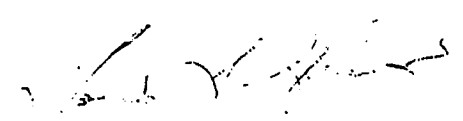
I don't really know what to think or what to believe. Certainly, each parent could have done more. You, of all people, know that I was far more concerned than the great majority of parents with children in Jonestown. I was the only parent to go to Jonestown AFTER CONGRESSMAN RYAN'S DEATH. On Monday night when I spoke to Douglas Ellis, your successor, he was of little or no help, but he did know who I was. He knew of the file we had established regarding my daughter and referred to it. He also told me to go home; that I would never get to Jonestown; which, kindly put, was as stupid and as facetious a remark, as I have ever heard.

I have been, in the course of my life, a gunnary expert, a veteran of World War II, President of a 300 man Detective Agency, as well as a person who has been in the Liberian jungles, to primitive areas in the jungles of Brazil, the Phillipine jungle and less dense jungle areas in Indonesia. I would scarcely be called inexperienced, and have seen countless dead bodies under the strangest of circumstances because of my wartime service and my lifetime occupation. Why else would you imagine that a Guyanese Police Chief would allow me to go to Jonestown and no one else? If he took the trouble to find me qualified to go, why couldn't the American Consulate at least help?

February 28, 1979

Richard, I do appreciate our talks and I do understand that it would have required probably a breach of regulations to go much further beyond the rather simple understanding that we had. I do feel, however, that both this Government and the Guyanese Government did a rather poor job from beginning to end in the handling of Jonestown.

I enclose some "shots" taken November 22, 1978 of Jonestown--pictures appropriately marked on the reverse.







[The page contains approximately 10 lines of extremely faint, illegible handwriting.]

